

**March 17, 2010**

**Education Committee**

**Paul Slager, President of the Board of Directors**

**Brain Injury Association of Connecticut**

Mr. Chairmen and Members of the Education Committee:

My thanks for this opportunity to offer my support for ***RSB 456: An Act Concerning Student Athletes and Concussions***. As both President of the Board of Directors of the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut and an attorney who represents brain injury survivors and their family members, I appreciate how quickly and completely lives can be shattered by the experience of a brain injury.

I know that those fortunate enough to survive their brain injuries face a future consistently undermined by the residual effects of their injury. And I know the families of brain injury survivors face their own serious emotional, logistical, and financial challenges caring for a loved one so affected.

I also know it doesn't take a catastrophic car accident to cause a serious brain injury. In fact, it doesn't even require a blow to the head or a period of unconsciousness. All that's required is enough impact to concuss the brain, and that's precisely the kind of impact our youngsters can be exposed to every day during casual play or organized sports. It's no wonder as many as 3.8 million children and teens experience sports and recreation-related concussions in the U.S. every year. This is a volume of injuries we ought not accept — nor is it acceptable that few parents and coaches know:

(1.) a concussion is a brain injury;

(2.) all brain injuries are serious;

(3.) brain injuries are even more serious in young people because the developing brain is more sensitive to trauma and because children have weaker necks than adults, making brain trauma more damaging; and

(4.) failure to diagnose and properly treat a concussive brain injury, and allowing a person to experience repeated concussions, can cause *Second Impact Syndrome* — a condition that can result in permanent brain damage and even death.

***RSB 456: An Act Concerning Student Athletes and Concussions.***

would accomplish two critical objectives. It would ensure:

- that parents and coaches are trained to recognize the symptoms of both concussion and *Second Impact Syndrome* and respond appropriately; and
- that health care professionals trained in the treatment of concussions, would become the only ones permitted to determine if it is safe for a youngster to return to play.

As other proponents of ***RSB 456*** have noted, Washington and Oregon passed this legislation last year, and less than a month after the law went into effect in Washington, a coach trained to identify the symptoms of concussion literally saved a student's life by sending him directly to a medical professional instead of back on the field or simply home.

And so I urge you, as responsible legislators, to enact ***RSB 456*** as soon as possible. Lives will be saved, as will the untold dollars that inevitably go toward caring for those dependent on public benefits as a result of their brain injuries.

Thank you.